

- Forest conservation

How the planet's "lungs" contribute to our health, well-being

Fiji Sun · 21 Mar 2023 · 18 · Source:

Forests make our lives better in countless ways. They sustain us – from clean air and water, to food and fuel, to medicines and income. Being near trees helps boost our immune systems, lower blood pressure, reduce stress, and improve mood.



When forests are healthy and well-managed they safeguard the health of our planet, by mitigating climate change, protecting biodiversity, and building resilience to natural disasters. Forests cover 31% of all land and are the largest terrestrial carbon sink, absorbing about two billion tonnes of CO₂ every year.

Globally, 76 million tonnes of food products come from forests, 95 per cent of which are plant-based.

Many of the medicines we rely on come from forests. Plantbased medicines account for 25 per cent of medicinal drugs used in developed countries and as much as 80% of medicinal drugs in developing countries. It is estimated that 75 per cent of the world's accessible freshwater comes from forested watersheds and 80% of all landbased species depend on forests for their habitat.

When forests are healthy, they can act as protective buffers against the impacts of storms and other natural hazards.

Zoonotic diseases typically emerge from the transfer of pathogens from animals to humans, when natural landscapes such as forests are cleared.

Yet despite this, forests are often undervalued, and we continue to lose ten million hectares of forests every year.

Reversing the loss of forests and turning the tide on deforestation are essential if we want a healthy future for people and the planet.

This is why the theme of this year's International Day of Forests on 21 March 2023, is "Forests and Health".

The fate of the world's forests and the health of future generations, depends on the actions that we take today.